



ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT, COMMUNITIES AND CITIZENSHIP SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Environment, Transport, Communities and Citizenship Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 13 October 2010 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Tim McNally (Chair)
Councillor Renata Hamvas
Councillor Kevin Ahern
Councillor James Barber
Councillor Sunil Chopra
Councillor Norma Gibbes
Councillor Graham Neale

**OTHER MEMBERS
PRESENT:**

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:**

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 There were none.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

2.1 There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2010 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting

5. FEEDBACK FROM THE MANOR PLACE SITE VISIT

- 5.1 The chair referred to written feedback from Karen Harris, scrutiny project manager, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He then added his own comments and observations. Key points raised included as follows:

- The chair was of the view that the Manor Place site is clearly not fit for purpose and seems to be of another age. It is not suitable for modern vehicle sizes and compels the waste collection trucks to manoeuvre several multi-point turns. A railway line still runs through the site, which was previously used for removing waste. The chair explained that the site include
- A listed building which is a former swimming pool and is unsuitable for its current use. The open plan site is also be very exposed during winter months.
- He remarked that he was impressed however by the enthusiasm of the staff at the site and is pleased that the new site will have 50 new staff, with a large percentage of these likely to be Southwark residents.
- The Manor Place depot is very 'low-tech' and is basically reliant on manual labour. All the co-mingled recycling and food waste has to be handled currently by Greenwich, as the Manor Place site can not deal with this.
- Members were shown "time lapse" photographs of the new site on Old Kent Road, which will be ready by January 2012 and is to include an education centre. Annie Baker, Waste Contract and Strategy Manager, added that the new site would provide Southwark's first Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) and Materials Recycling Facility (MRF).
- Members asked Veolia staff what they thought holds people back from recycling and what could be done to encourage an increase. Veolia staff were of the opinion that the main challenges for recycling in Southwark are fourfold:-
 - The nature of the housing, mainly in flats and multiple-occupancy units
 - Converting engagement into extraction – many people recycle but they do not recycle enough
 - The transient nature of Southwark's population and different cultural backgrounds who need encouraging to recycle
 - The UK's landfill heritage
- Veolia staff also gave the following assessment of Southwark 's recycling rates:
 - 20% of waste is currently recycled
 - 40% is the Southwark target
 - 60% would be possible with the right motivation

- The Old Kent Road facility with its ability to handle and treat a wider range of waste products is a necessary component of efforts to increase recycling and waste management in the borough, but it is not sufficient in itself to achieve the step change in recycling that is needed to reach the 40% target. Members commented that if people recycle at 40% of waste, this is still relatively low and wondered whether fortnightly waste collections could help reach a higher target. The chair highlighted that if the 40% target for recycling is reached, this still leaves 60% of waste that could potentially be recycled.
 - Members also briefly referred to the current food waste pilot and the benefit of introducing food waste as an additional waste component, as it has a high water content which is significant when waste figures is largely measured by weight. In view of Southwark having the largest housing stock in London, however, members queried how food waste collection could work effectively in high rise flats.
 - The Councillors discussed how to encourage more recycling generally, and questioned, for example, whether an option could be to incorporate different types of chutes into estates buildings.
- 5.11 Other members commented that there are obviously genuine challenges, but that they came away from the site visit with a positive sense about the way forward.

Food Waste Pilot

- 5.2 Members queried what could be done to encourage a transient population to engage with recycling and why blocks of flats were not included in the food waste pilot: It was asked who chose the pilot sites and what was the reasoning behind the selection. Members also suggested that residents need to be encouraged by a carrot rather than stick approach and asked what could motivate residents.
- 5.3 Members commented that as the council moves towards co-mingling, the blue boxes for individual houses and flats will be too small and that people living in smaller flats would not have the space for several bins for different types of waste.
- 5.14 Members also noted that some residents have said that the blue boxes are too small and asked whether there will be scope for flat residents to have larger bins once the Old Kent Road site is operational.
- 5.15 Because of the housing mix in Southwark it is clear that different solutions will be needed in different parts of the borough. There was concern that the pilot would offer a solution for certain street properties only. Members were of the view that there is a need for a flexible approach for all parts of the borough.
- 5.16 In response to the members' comments, the waste manager offered to cover the following key issues:
- a) Storage capacity
 - b) Waste collection from high-rise flats
 - c) How the food pilot areas were selected
 - d) The percentage of refuse that is recyclable

e) Learning form other areas, especially on how to incentivise

- 5.17 On the subject of the food pilot Councillors enquired whether it was realistic to expect recycling rates to double from 35% to 70%. The waste manager confirmed that this was the case.
- 5.18 Councillors asked how people were being educated about the new pilot and whether the information was pictorial. It was agreed that copies of the leaflets which are very pictorial and which householders received, would be circulated to members of the sub-committee.
- 5.19 Councillor Chopra enquired whether residents who used the wrong coloured box for their rubbish would be fined as he had heard this was the case in other boroughs.
- 5.20 It was explained that councils do have the right to impose fines for non-compliance with recycling rules, but there are currently no plans to do so in Southwark, preferring the approach of designing a scheme that would be easy to use.
- 5.21 Councillors agreed that it was important to have a principle of encouragement rather than punishment for recycling policy.
- 5.22 The waste manager explained that the council has tried many methods of encouraging recycling. The first scheme was “tag it to bag it”. Thousands of households joined in the first weeks but participation tailed off. This scheme included a £1000 prize at the start of each month. Now there is the chance each month for five participants to receive £200, whereby officers select five properties at random and check to see whether the residents are recycling. The waste manager added that as the borough has such massively diverse housing stock it is necessary to find various ways to incentivise all people. The scheme has been promoted at times in Southwark Life and a large event was held which brought together many winners from several months.
- 5.23 The waste manager explained that Southwark had trialled another scheme in which league tables were set up for each estate and prizes offered for categories such as the most improved estate. This garnered little interest however and was stopped. She then referred to a successful project run by Veolia in Windsor and Maidenhead where residents accrue points (similar to those gained by using a Nectar card) as their recycling containers are chipped and weighed. She stated that this was regarded as popular and effective and that if the technology is affordable and available there are ways that this could work in Southwark – such as the use of barcodes on bags. The waste manager herself favoured this option and commented that people could benefit in direct proportion to the extent that they recycle.
- 5.24 Members queried whether an option for residents of a 16th floor flat could be to put mixed recycling items into a bag, peel off a bar-coded sticker and take this down to communal bins, confident that it would be scanned and so award them points. The waste manager confirmed that this was the type of process she was imagining and said that on the face of things it is not easy to see how this could be delivered

borough wide, but it seems feasible. She added that this type of scheme could make it possible to write to those households that do not appear to be recycling.

- 5.25 In response to members' queries about how much the council pays for a tonne of landfill, the waste manager stated that the cost is approximately £85 but is possibly going up to £100 and that every household produces approximately 1 tonne yearly. She added that all waste collected that is recyclable is recycled and that Southwark spends close to £20 million on waste management annually. This costs individual households approximately £50 to £60 annually - or about £1.50 per week.
- 5.26 Members asked what proportion of waste collected is domestic and what amount is commercial. The waste manager clarified that the council does not collect any commercial waste. She commented however that Southwark runs Environmental Business awards.
- 5.27 Members requested details about the number of kitchen caddies and other sized food waste bins that had been distributed. The waste manager said that there were 1000 caddies in stock ready to go and that due to storage restrictions it was possible only to have a certain number at the depot at one time. Approximately 2000 caddies had been distributed.
- 5.28 Regarding the reasoning behind how the pilot areas had been chosen, the waste manager explained that this had been devised to follow the collection areas and sequence of four waste crews. Had the areas been chosen in a different way, operationally it would have been far more difficult to organise.
- 5.29 Discussion took place on the best way to encourage recycling in flats. Discussion took place on fortnightly collections but there are issues about the frequency of collecting food waste and the cost of collections.
- 5.30 Members asked about co-mingling recycling arrangements. It was confirmed that co-mingling is currently underway in the food pilot area. It will be rolled out across the borough in 2011 and 2012 to coincide with the opening of the Old Kent Road site.
- 5.31.1 Discussion took place on the use of chutes in flats to make recycling easier. It was agreed that further information would be sought on the system in use in Tower Hamlets to see if lessons could be learnt for Southwark.
- 5.32 Councillor Barber raised this issue of biodegradable nappies. There was discussion about the best approach to this issue. It was agreed that more information would be supplied about the long term solution on the disposal of nappies to the sub-committee.
- 5.33 There was discussion on the best way of encouraging recycling across the borough and it was agreed that then new recycling guide will be circulated to the sub-committee as soon as it is available.
- 5.34 Following discussion it was agreed that the Vangent (call centre) scripts should be supplied to sub-committee members so they can check if re-cycling is offered as

an option if recycling bulky items.

6. RECYCLING SCRUTINY

6.1 This item was discussed within the broad topic of recycling under item 5.

7. FOOD RECYCLING PILOT

7.1 This item was discussed within the broad topic of recycling under item 5.

8. PLANNING FOR QUESTIONS TO COUNCILLOR HARGROVE

9.1 There was discussion over the difficulty in getting to terms with the edges of the borough issues.

9.2 It was agreed that to take this issue forward a presentation on the good practice with the Cut will be presented to the next meeting

9. THE EDGES OF THE BOROUGH SCRUTINY

CHAIR:

DATED:

[EXEC ONLY]

DEADLINE FOR NOTIFICATION OF CALL-IN UNDER SECTION 18 OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES IS MIDNIGHT, [DATE].

THE ABOVE DECISIONS WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTABLE UNTIL AFTER THAT DATE. SHOULD A DECISION OF THE EXECUTIVE BE CALLED-IN FOR SCRUTINY, THEN THE RELEVANT DECISION WILL BE HELD IN ABEYANCE PENDING THE OUTCOME OF SCRUTINY CONSIDERATION.